



Storrow Drive Tunnel Project

Summary of Public Meetings (2) March 27 and 29, 2006

A second round of Public Meetings on the **Storrow Drive Tunnel Project** was held the last week of March 2006. The meetings were preceded by an hour-long Open House, which allowed participants to review four categories of project options in detail. Engineers and/or DCR staff members were on hand to answer questions during the first hour. Two posters with layout plans, typical sections, renderings and key features were available for each of the option families. Comment sheets were made available for participants to comment in writing on the options.

The meetings were held on **Monday, 3/27** in the Mezzanine Conference Room of the Boston Public Library (BPL) and on **Wednesday, 3/29** at the Morse School in Cambridge.

The same general format and PowerPoint presentations were employed for these meetings. The agenda included:

- Open House: Approximately one hour to review the boards on each option and discuss them with DCR staff and consulting engineers
- Opening Remarks, *Commissioner Stephen Burrington or Deputy Commissioner for Planning and Engineering Karst Hooeboom*;
- Project Introduction and PowerPoint Presentation, *Karl Haglund*, Regional Planner;
- Presentation: The Project Need; Options; Review Process; and Preliminary Evaluation led by *Karl Haglund*;
- Participant questions and discussion.

Paul Kelley, Simpson Gumpertz & Heger, Inc., participated in the discussion section of the meetings as the project consultant, addressing engineering issues raised by the audience.

A copy of the PowerPoint presentation is available on [DCR's website](#).

Commissioner Stephen Burrington opened the March 27 meeting and welcomed the participants to the meeting and to the project. He said this is the second in a year-long series of meetings to discuss a range of options for addressing the deteriorating Storrow Drive Tunnel. DCR's goal for the project is to repair the tunnel, which is a deteriorated piece of infrastructure, and to improve the parkland in the Esplanade for many generations to come. The goal of the first set of meetings in February was to announce the project, describe the outreach process and outline criteria to be applied to the reconstruction options. The March meeting goals are to introduce the families of options that DCR has developed after a number of meetings and conversations and to collect ideas, comments and reactions before submitting an Environmental Notification Form (ENF) for the project.

Commissioner Burrington noted that the options are complex and each presents tradeoffs. DCR is conducting a dialogue with the affected Boston and Cambridge communities about those issues in the belief that this kind of review will result in a better, stronger project. The most immediate impacts affect the Back Bay and Beacon Hill communities, but traffic diversions are likely to have a wider impact. DCR is aware of the number of projects under discussion or in design that will impact Charles River crossings and parks and the Cambridge community. DCR is talking with these agencies and entities, and that information will be considered in the construction schedule and traffic analysis.

Commissioner Burrington introduced Karl Haglund to make the presentation and moderate the project discussion. He thanked the participants for their ideas and energy and welcomed them to stay involved in a number of ways as the project develops.

Public Meeting Summary

Boston Public Library, Boylston St., Boston

March 27, 2006, 6:15 PM

PowerPoint Presentation

Discussion/Comments Summary

Karl Haglund opened the meeting for questions and discussion. He reminded the participants to hand in comments sheets and asked them to give their names as they made comments for the record.

- Representative Marty Walz told the audience that she has been briefed consistently by DCR since learning about the project and she has met with many community and business groups to keep them up to date. She appreciates DCR's commitment to an open process and hopes that the community members will remain engaged to ensure a good project.
- Representative Byron Rushing said that the project will affect many residents deeply, which reinforces the importance of the open process. If the process appears to be flawed or bogus at any time, the community must stop it and begin anew. Rep. Rushing said that the most important issue may be how to keep the traffic and the city moving while the construction is underway, and that topic has not had sufficient thought yet. He said that the alternatives to reduce traffic on Storrow Drive have to be prepared carefully and should be permanent to lessen the traffic there.
- Richard Jordano from Senator Wilkerson's office was recognized and said that Sen. Wilkerson is following the project and she is available to talk with residents.
- Elliott Laffer, Groundwater Trust, asked what the fall meeting on traffic issues will consist of, and suggested that neighborhood and business associations should be represented in these discussions. The process will gain a lot from their involvement.
- Bill Gottlieb, a Beacon St. resident, asked about funding for the project. Commissioner Burren said that state transportation bond funds will be used for the project. DCR is working with Mass Highway, which will manage the construction portion. Cost will be a consideration if it is "too much," but it is too early to define what that might be.
- Chris Clapp is a Storrow Drive commuter who lives in Brighton. He suggested that DCR should consider more radical concepts for the project. Infrastructure investment can be used to reinvent and revitalize a region. DCR should consider options such as a tunnel beneath the river, an idea Chris Weller will present. This kind of development could be advanced under a public/private trust or partnership that would not be a public sector burden. It is a double-barreled tunnel beneath the river that could link with mass transit as well. It could provide air quality and clean water credits by aerating the bottom of the Charles and removing air pollution from cars. Mr. Clapp suggested this is more of an appropriate vision for the project and should improve livability.
- Pierre Bonin, a South End resident, asked which options take land from the Esplanade. Mr. Haglund said that the tunnel options could disrupt the Esplanade, but

would eventually give land back to green space. Those are options in the C and D families. None of the options takes land permanently.

- A speaker asked if DCR is considering adding an exit from the Mass Turnpike to ease traffic flow. Mr. Haglund said DCR is asking people at the Turnpike to look at that kind of option. DCR is meeting with several agencies that will be affected by the project and its impacts. Commissioner Burrington added that the Governor will take control of the Turnpike Authority Board this summer and he expects that will begin to result in better coordination among the relevant agencies.
- Peter Sherin, Neighborhood Association of Back Bay, expressed concern that the project element typically finished last, which is landscaping, might receive short shrift if cost overruns consume more of the funding than anticipated. The Central Artery and other models tend to reinforce that concern. Mr. Haglund noted that landscaping, for better or worse, tends to be a small but an important percentage of the total construction budget. It is one of DCR's goals to improve the landscaping and make it a contractual obligation.
- Steve Young, Beacon Hill, noted the plan to undertake an Origin and Destination Study and asked if the same kind of survey of pedestrians will take place. He suggested that testing the idea of making travel on the Mass Turnpike Extension free be undertaken before any traffic diversions are planned for Storrow Drive. Mr. Young also asked which construction project will begin first: the Storrow Drive Tunnel or the Longfellow Bridge. Mr. Haglund said the issue of which goes first, Longfellow or Storrow, will depend on the design details and progress over the next year or so. Mr. Haglund said there is information on pedestrians, and there are few places where walkways and sidewalks exceed capacity. There are locations where DCR can do a better job, but capacity is not the issue. Addressing Mr. Young's first question, Mr. Haglund said that the team is meeting with the Turnpike and reviewing that kind of suggestion, as well as the idea of a slingshot, which would permit westbound Turnpike travelers from Boston to make a U turn at the Allston tolls to enter Back Bay from the eastbound lane.
- Scott Walker, MAPC, observed that only the B options have the potential to reduce traffic. He asked if the others have the potential to increase traffic on Storrow Drive. Paul Kelley responded that the other options basically maintain the current level of traffic.
- A Cambridge resident noted that during work on the Tobin Bridge in the 1970s and during the Central Artery construction, some traffic just disappeared. DCR does not have to plan to replace 100% of the traffic.
- Another commenter made a list of things he did not want to see connected with the project: no elevated structure, no trucks, no HOV lanes (there's no room) and no Bechtel. He suggested setting up a blog or Internet site where people can advance ideas or sketches. Mr. Haglund said that project materials are posted on DCR's web site and any comments sent to DCR will be reviewed and get real attention.
- Meg Mainzer-Cohen, Back Bay Association, asked that DCR consider the potential economic impact the proposals could have on first class office space and the economy of Boston. One option will decrease traffic on Storrow Drive and potentially impact the only exit that connects Back Bay to the north and east. This is the kind of impact that DCR has to consider. Mr. Haglund said that is a good question to pose to the

experts. DCR will take a look at Ms. Mainzer-Cohen's suggestion. She reinforced the fact that the Arlington St. exit is the only access to Back Bay for westbound drivers (there is none on the Mass Turnpike).

- Sue Prindle asked about information in the presentation. Mr. Haglund said the PowerPoint presentation will be on DCR's website.
- Peter Shelley reiterated the importance of working with the Mass Turnpike on alternatives, and working with the Central Transportation Planning Staff on alternative traffic routes and patterns for both during and after the project.

Mr. Haglund thanked the members of the audience for their time and contributions and encouraged them to follow and participate in the project.

Public Meeting Summary

Morse School, Granite St., Cambridge

March 29, 2006, 6:15 PM

PowerPoint Presentation

Discussion/Comments Summary

Karl Haglund opened the meeting for questions and discussion. He reminded the participants to hand in comments sheets and asked them to give their names as they made comments for the record. Mr. Haglund invited participants to submit comments. If mailing is preferred, comments can be sent to DCR at 251 Causeway St., Boston, MA 02114. Mr. Haglund invited participants to offer comments; noting that due to time constraints they should be limited to 3-4 minutes.

- During the presentation, a participant had asked why traffic lights are needed. Mr. Haglund said that the lights are necessary at pedestrian crossings and to facilitate entry and exit movements to the Esplanade.
- Representative Walz praised the DCR for working closely with other agencies and developing this process for the project. She urged people to participate and send comments and questions to the project email address – info@reginavilla.com – where all information received will be categorized and considered. She recommended that people spend time studying the options and comment. She noted that the presentation already reflects comments received at the March 27 meeting. The project team is taking the input, using it and working side-by-side with the public. The project process is genuine and is influencing the outcome. She again urged people to attend project meetings. She asked people to include her in their emails. Her email address is marty.walz@state.ma.us. She thanked DCR for holding the meetings and the participants for attending.
- Representative Wolf noted that she represents the area of Cambridge north of Porter Square to Central Square. She thanked DCR for holding the meetings and the Cambridge neighborhoods in the project area for participating. She noted that the project is complicated but the process is open and urged people to consider the impacts of today's decisions on future generations. Representative Wolf said that there will be trade offs – short term difficulties for long term gains. She said she has no opinion at this time on the options, but wanted to make three points. (1) She said she hoped everyone would be open to ideas and think outside the box for solutions. (2) She applauded the origin/destination study as a way to inform decision making about traffic management and other options during construction. She said that the timing of the study is very important. For instance, the results would be atypical if the study is conducted in the summer. Impacts to the Cambridge area around Memorial Drive and residential streets in the area should be carefully considered. An example of unanticipated impacts to local streets occurred during Fresh Pond Parkway construction. (3) Working with the MBTA to explore opportunities to reduce traffic using public transit should be a major focus, as should other options to reduce impacts to local streets. Options such as making the Turnpike between Boston and Allston free during construction should be explored. Representative Wolf closed

by saying that creativity is necessary to make the project viable and it should enhance the beauty of the parkland. She again thanked participants for attending the meeting. Mr. Haglund said that the origin/destination study will be conducted the last week of April. The focus will be on drivers who are already stopped due to traffic signals, rather than disrupting traffic by stopping moving vehicles. DCR is exploring incentives to encourage motorists to respond.

- Councilor Davis said that there should be an emphasis on public transit solutions, such as increasing parking at the Alewife Red Line Station. She remarked that Cambridge has a grant for a German planner to conduct behavior marketing to encourage people to change their mode of travel to avert major capital projects. She urged DCR to avoid adding more traffic to Memorial Drive.
- Ron Newman, Somerville Bicycle Committee, asked DCR to maintain access through the construction area to the Esplanade. He noted that option D with the small surface road and traffic lights would increase pollution and improvements at Leverett Circle could be reversed. He asked for clarification regarding the 3 and 6 lane surface road options and added that a crosswalk at Clarendon Street to the Esplanade should be included.
- Trellis Stepter, Boston Representative Byron Rushing's office, asked if traffic studies have already been completed for Storrow Drive, Memorial Drive and the Turnpike. Mr. Haglund said that Storrow Drive counts have been completed, including the on and off ramps. Mass Highway's annual region-wide counts are the basis for the traffic analysis. The origin/destination study will further inform the traffic study. There is no current information for Memorial Drive. The Storrow Drive counts are averaged. Paul Kelley, Simpson Gumpertz & Heger (SGH), added that counts have been conducted at three locations on Memorial Drive and the total traffic volume for that roadway is 30,000 cars/day. Storrow Drive carries 103,000 cars/day. .
- A participant from 75 Massachusetts Avenue asked about the difference between the 35 and 40 year life spans. He asked why a life span of less than 75 years is being considered. He questioned the openness of the process and said he believes it will result in the destruction of the Charles River. He added that DCR has eliminated parking and asked why Cambridge can't be avoided. He said he opposed taking trees down on Memorial Drive in order to straighten the road, which he said is being done to accommodate increased traffic from Storrow Drive during construction.
- Kathy Podgers, a Pearl Street resident, commended DCR on the emphasis on ADA compliance in general. She stated three points. (1) There is currently no place for disabled people to pull over and park on Storrow Drive to access the Esplanade. (2) She commented on the definition of environment and asked if statistics on pollution or habitat and harborage will be included. There should be space for wildlife. (3) She noted that when the toll on the Tobin Bridge was implemented, motorists found other ways to get to destinations in Boston and asked that these routes be considered – for instance, McGrath Highway and Arlington Street to cross Back Bay – in the traffic study. She suggested implementing an express bus service to reduce this traffic. Ms. Podgers thanked DCR for the opportunity to provide feedback.
- Jude Stull said that Helen Storrow never intended for a roadway to be part of the Esplanade. He is concerned about threats to the beech trees on Memorial Drive due to this project. Deputy Commissioner Hoozeboom stated that the Commissioner of

DCR has committed to no short term loss of trees that are in good health; however, there are options that include removing trees. If MEPA requires DCR to further study options that include tree removal, DCR must comply.

- Don Carlson, Sierra Club, asked about the traffic diversion plans. Mr. Haglund said that before plans can be developed the results of the origin/destination study must be analyzed. The next series of meetings in October will present traffic management ideas. General trade-offs are being looked at now to make sure that major categories are included, but more data is needed.
- Representative Walz said that since February there has been discussion about rerouting traffic into the Esplanade. Mr. Haglund reported that he has been told that the Commissioner of Mass Highway will not support rerouting traffic into the Esplanade and DCR has already committed to this.
- Fritz Casselman asked DCR to consult with the neighborhood to determine which intersections to study. He requested that DCR circulate a list of intersections currently on the list for study and post the information on the web. Mr. Kelley, SGH, said that Central Transportation Planning Staff (CTPS) will consider and initiate more regional studies. The origin/destination study should be completed at the end of June and will be presented at September workshops that are geared toward transportation issues and experts. The dates of the study have been moved back to provide more opportunity for input. Representatives will be able to attend to express various interests and can also do so via the website. He noted that participating in the transportation workshops will require careful study of the data and other information.
- Representative Wolf said that there are a number of people who are concerned when officials or large interest groups are the only ones invited to participate in this type of workshop. She requested that other groups or individuals be allowed to appoint someone to participate on their behalf. It is an approach that allows neighbors to participate in this piece of the process. Mr. Haglund said that DCR would commit to trying to find a way to accomplish the goals of the workshop, while also allowing individuals who are not necessarily experts to participate and have input.
- Phil Boucher reminded participants and DCR about the problem that arose on the Rose Fitzgerald Greenway where there was not enough soil depth to support tree plantings. He urged DCR to consider this issue in advance to avoid a similar situation.
- A participant asked about the timeframe of this project with regard to the Central Artery. Mr. Kelley (SGH) said that it will be about five years before construction begins. By that time, the Longfellow Bridge Restoration Project will also be substantially complete.
- Chris Connaire spoke about the HOSITT concept; to restore the vision of Helen Storrow and decrease impacts to the Esplanade. She said there is a fifth option to entertain; a tunnel under the Charles River from Leverett Circle to Charlesgate, which would return all of the Esplanade to parkland by eliminating the roadway. A clean water trust could be set up and pollution credits could be awarded. She suggested that there are private benefactors, like Helen Storrow, who may be willing to help with the endeavor. The tunnel would eliminate any disruptions to the Esplanade, except for the entrance and exit ramps. Mr. Haglund said that DCR has recently received information about the concept and is committed to looking at all suggestions.

- A participant asked about the state of funding for the project. Deputy Commissioner Hooeboom said it is included in Mass Highway's five year funding plan. He said the state would fund the project entirely. Mr. Haglund added that the funding would be part of a bond, not annual funding appropriations.
- Bill August, Dana Park Neighborhood Association, thanked DCR for implementing the project process. He offered four comments. (1) Mr. August asked that the outreach process be institutionalized and include other Cambridge groups. (2) He said that returning the entire parkland to the public is good, but will have to be incremental. He asked about the duration and timeframe of traffic impacts. Has the 2 to 4 year estimate been subjected to rigorous testing? He asked if DCR has considered pre-assembly or pre-fabrication of components of the tunnel off-site. Mr. Kelley, SGH, responded that the estimate of 26 months for option A3 is a good one, but that the 48 month duration for options C2 and D2 are guesses at this point, without the benefit of further analysis. He said that the EIR process during the upcoming summer would include more analysis of the options. He noted that the entire project area would not experience construction impacts during the entire project duration. For instance, while construction was taking place along Back Street on the eastbound side, westbound traffic would be maintained. Similarly, when construction on the westbound side was underway, vehicles traveling in that direction would be diverted to use the tunnel in a reverse direction. He said that option C2 would definitely be longer than A3, but specifics aren't known yet. For option D2, with new tunnels, cut and cover construction makes pre-fabrication difficult with regard to sequencing and timing. (3) Mr. August said coordinating with the MBTA and offering incentives is a good idea. He said that the road should have fewer cars traveling in it in general. To be credible and effective the project should have concrete, tangible results. He also supported the idea of offering free Red Line travel. Decreasing the traffic volume on the Mass Avenue Bridge by increasing Red Line ridership is good. (4) Regarding the traffic analysis, Mr. August asked that DCR not focus just on total volume, but also traffic volume relative to roadway capacity to find the weakest links, such as Memorial Drive during rush hour. The impacts of an additional 10,000 cars on the Turnpike should be weighed in relation to the impacts of 2,000 more cars on Memorial Drive.
- A participant expressed concern about the impacts of the project on the BU Bridge rotary and the effects on air pollution.
- Renata von Tscharner, Charles River Conservancy, asked DCR to expand the evaluation criteria to include the larger picture and urban design visions.
- Carolyn Shipley asked about the purpose of the origin/destination study. She said that a subpart of the study should be the use of Storrow Drive for commuting and options should be considered such as asking companies if they offer flex-time and if not, would it be possible?
- Steve Kaiser asked DCR to consider a focus on existing traffic bottlenecks. He said that the usual study areas are Leverett Circle, Charles Circle, Land Boulevard, and O'Brien Highway, but that the River Street exit off the Turnpike should be a priority. He asked about the cost of the at-grade options and their impact on the Esplanade. He suggested setting up an email blog to solicit more comments/participation.

- Lawrence Adkins, President of the Riverside Neighborhood Association, commented on MBTA coordination. He noted that a missing element of the traffic management and coordination is the universities. He said he often sees university shuttle buses that are not full and suggested that DCR work with the universities to utilize the unused capacity to prevent overcapacity of the MBTA. He stated that all elements of the transportation system should be used to capacity to eliminate additional vehicle trips on local roads.
- Tom Joyce, East Cambridge Planning Team, said that it would be helpful to know what the alternate routes are that motorists would take to get to their destinations if they were aware of a traffic tie-up on Storrow Drive. Mr. Kelley, SGH, said that participants should email suggested survey questions. He said that the options are good compared to the existing conditions, but they are very preliminary. DCR needs to be able to evaluate impacts, such as those to Cambridge during construction. Mr. Kelley said that the Projected Volume/Capacity Ratio table included in the PowerPoint presentation shows the change in demand over capacity for existing conditions, partial and full closures. Once a location ratio is greater than one, the demand has exceeded capacity. DCR would prefer to maintain traffic through some of the options and to avoid this situation at hot spots. When these hot spots and intersections are known, they will be added and the level of analysis increased. Mr. Kelley said that the potential impacts of the Storrow Drive tunnel project to the neighborhoods will be greater than those of the Central Artery.
- Chris Weller thanked Bill August for commenting on the importance of coordinating with the MBTA Red Line. He suggested that the requirement for the MBTA to cooperate with incentives be embedded in the bond issue. Mr. Weller said he questions the basic assumption about the condition of the tunnel and thinks the danger may not be as great as is being presented. He suggested that continuing to patch could be a viable short term solution to extend the life of the tunnel further to permit the study of other alternatives such as a tunnel under the Charles River. He wants the engineering report scrutinized. Mr. Haglund said that DCR will continue to maintain the tunnel, but there are unknowns about this approach and when they will no longer work cannot be predicted. He said that DCR would never allow cars to travel in the tunnel if it were unsafe. Deputy Commissioner Hooeboom added that while the band-aid approach might work for a while, at some point DCR might have to shut the tunnel down without much advance notice. DCR will work to minimize any inconveniences to the neighborhoods.
- A participant stated that the project has no benefits to Cambridge residents.
- Representative Wolf said she supports the idea of increasing service/parking at Alewife, adding that Park and Ride opportunities should also be explored.
- A participant asked if DCR has confirmed the capacity and ability of bridges to take the added traffic volume, such as BU and Western Avenue. Deputy Commissioner Hooeboom said that Mass Highway evaluates structures around the state. Inspection schedules vary and are based on the condition of the bridges.

In closing, Mr. Haglund said that the parklands are a great asset. He urged people to look at the plans critically and to be patient but persistent. He said the project presents an

opportunity for an improved public landscape. Mr. Haglund thanked participants for attending and urged them to stay involved.